

Washington Business Journal - May 4, 2010  
[washington/stories/2010/05/03/daily22.html](http://washington/stories/2010/05/03/daily22.html)

## WASHINGTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

Tuesday, May 4, 2010 | Modified: Wednesday, May 5, 2010

# Montgomery County greenlights 'Science City'

Washington Business Journal - by [Vandana Sinha](#)

The Montgomery County Council unanimously approved on Tuesday a scaled-down master plan for its next "Science City" in an attempt to make its life sciences sector a stronger player in the national arena, while appeasing nearby residents worried that the development would stain their quality of life.

Coinciding with the industry's highest-profile event, the **Biotechnology Industry Organization** annual conference this week in Chicago, the County Council opted in a final vote to trim the original Gaithersburg West master plan — now dubbed the Great Seneca Science Corridor — from 20 million to 17.5 million square feet of allowed total development. The area is now approved for 13 million square feet of development.

The council also opted for an approach that tackles the new development in multiple stages, each dependent on the previous stage being implemented appropriately. The project would start with 11.1 million total allowed square feet of commercial development, before easing up to 13.4 million allowed square feet, then up to 15.7 million in the third stage until it reached the maximum 17.5 million allowed square footage in the fourth and final stage.

The newly approved master plan, anchored by a **Johns Hopkins University** research campus on the former Belward Farm, also calls for a maximum of 9,000 residential units and 52,500 new jobs. It requires neighborhood involvement in the county's regular monitoring of transportation issues, funding for the Corridor Cities Transitway system from Shady Grove Metro to Clarksburg and several open spaces, including those that would compose up to 46 percent of Johns Hopkins' Belward section.

Council members OK'ed the master plan last month in their **first preliminary vote**, the first indication that the previously divided body would be able to back a project that had earned criticism from next-door communities as well as Rockville and Gaithersburg leaders for its size.

Supporters said the scope needed to reflect the county's vision for a burgeoning life sciences sector. "To do something significant, we've really got to up the ante," said Montgomery Councilman Mike Knapp, D-District 2, in support of the bill Tuesday. "We have done yeoman's work to really put ourselves heads and shoulders above everyone else."

But narrowing that scope helped bring former opponents such as Councilman Phil Andrews, D-District 3, on board. Andrews voted in favor of the project Tuesday after adding an amendment during discussion that widened the open-space buffer at the corner of Darnestown and Muddy Branch roads — a change that JHU officials said they could accommodate.

"We support the county in its belief that this master plan demonstrates the best in smart growth planning," the university said in a statement after the Tuesday vote. "We are encouraged that the vision for a world-class science center is preserved and that the community's concerns are being addressed."

Though, Councilman Marc Elrich, D-At large, who said he switched his prior dissenting vote in support of the final proposal Tuesday because of its density reductions and preference given to life sciences jobs, still questioned how the county would secure the funding to turn its vision into reality.

"Neither us nor the state has a plan nor a clue for how to fund the planned infrastructure," he said. "Without the infrastructure, none of the benefits touted for this plan will come to fruition."

[vsinha@bizjournals.com](mailto:vsinha@bizjournals.com)

All contents of this site © American City Business Journals Inc. All rights reserved.

### MEDIA

